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AUTHOR Long, James P.
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ABSTRACT

Based on testimony delivered at a 1983 American Vocational Association (AVA) hearing on "Vocational Technical Education in the Community College," this draft AVA position paper examines the current status and future of the community college's role in the delivery of vocational education. First, information is presented on the hearing and its objectives, together with a list of presenters, and the development of the position paper is described. The next section begins with statistics on vocational education nationwide and the community college's prominence at the postsecondary level and then summarizes hearing presenters' views on the current state of vocational education. Highlights are the community colleges' responsiveness to quick-start training requests from state departments of commerce; worker retraining and technical assistance to business and industry as major vocational education functions; changes in career counseling; and a sound funding base for vocational education. The next section summarizes the presenters' perceptions of the future, noting the need to equip people to adapt to a variety of jobs; the continuing demand for engineers and engineering technicians; the likelihood of close national scrutiny; and employer demand for advanced level skills from two-year college graduates. Finally, a compilation of the changes suggested by the presenters is provided, including the need to decrease student waiting lists, eliminate governance problems, upgrade technical faculty, and increase company-specific training. (LAL)

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VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A PROMISING FUTURE

A Paper Developed for the
American Vocational Association
Board of Directors

by

James P. Long
Senior Research Specialist

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1983-84 academic year the American Vocational Association (AVA) focused on the nation's community colleges as a major deliverer of vocational education. This focus involved two main elements: a special issue of the AVA journal and a public board hearing at the start of the annual convention.

The September 1983 issue of VocEd, the AVA Journal, was devoted to "Vocational Education in the Community College: Growth and Change Come to the Campus." The issue featured articles written by postsecondary educators describing exemplary programs on community college campuses all over the nation.

On December 1, 1983, the AVA Board held a public hearing in Anaheim, California, on the topic "Vocational Technical Education in the Community College." The purpose of the hearing was to provide a national forum for the exchange of information and ideas related to the improvement of the delivery of vocational technical education at the community college level; and to aid vocational educators in becoming and staying current in developments and innovations related to vocational education on the community college level.

The expected outcomes of the hearing were:

1) Clarification of important issues and concerns related to the improvement of vocational education on the community college level.

2) Establishment of possible agenda items for discussion and debate at other forums and intervention points.

3) Opening of new channels of communications; and

4) An exchange of view-points and knowledge related to the problem.

Those invited to give testimony at the board hearing were the following:

Presenter-Title	Topic
1) Joe D. Mills, Director Division of Voc-Ed, Florida	(No Topic Assigned)
2) Norman Watson, Chancellor Coast Community College, California	(No Topic Assigned)
3) Robert Morgan, Chief, VEDS Section, NCES, Washington, DC	A National Description of Vo-Tech Education in the Community College
4) Warren Groff, Vice President, North Central Technical College, Ohio	Strategic Planning for Vocational Education on the Community College Level
5) Leslie Koltai, Chancellor, Los Angeles Community College, California	Cost Effectiveness of Community College Programs
6) Madge Benovitz, SEA Board Member, Pennsylvania	Community Colleges and the Governance Point of View
7) Dominic Mohamed, Associate Professor of Vocational Education, Florida	Staffing of Vo-Tech Education in the Community College
8) Ruth Grass, Career Counselor, Michigan	Career Counseling and Supportive Services for Vo-Tech Education in the Community College
9) Pat Hill Hubbard, Vice President, American Electronics Association, California	Industry's Views for Improving Vo-Tech Education in the Community College
10) Charles S. Benson, Professor, University of California (Berkeley)	Financing of Vo-Tech Education in the Community College
11) Jesse W. Burt, Director of Industry, Department of Education, Florida	Capacities of Community Colleges to Respond to Rapidly Changing Labor Markets

Presenter-Title	Topic
12) Dan Hull, President, CORD, Texas	Developing Articulated Programs
13) Tom Barton, President, Greenville Technical College, South Carolina	High Technology: Vocational Education's Response on the Community College Level
14) J. William Wenrich, Chancellor, Rancho Santiago Community College, California	Building Partnerships Between Vocational Education in the Community College, the Private Sector
15) Catharine Warmbrod, Research Specialist, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio	Retraining and Upgrading of Workers on the Community College Level

Testimony was given by the following person whose name did not appear on the original list of those invited to make presentations during the hearing:

16) Glen Davidson, Assistant State Director of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, Wisconsin	Postsecondary Vocational Education in Wisconsin

The testimony was recorded on audiotape and most of the presenters made available either copies of their text or notes from which they spoke.

In Spring 1984 the author of this paper was asked by AVA to transcribe the audiotapes and (by comparing the transcribed copies to the text and notes, as available) to produce a complete compilation of the testimony given at the board hearing. This work was terminated in June 1984 and work done to that point was submitted to Gene Bottoms, AVA Executive Director, in an unedited rough draft form at his explicit request. The author of this paper was then asked to submit (instead of a complete compilation

of all transcribed testimony) a brief, 10 page, position paper on the community college for the AVA Board to consider for adoption. The paper was to be based on the testimony given and was to be submitted to a board committee on July 11, 1984, in draft form. This paper constitutes the draft of such a proposed position paper for AVA to consider.

There is some likelihood that the complete transcript of the hearing will be edited by the AVA publications staff and published at some future time by AVA.

VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION

IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES: STATE OF THE ART

Postsecondary vocational education has grown larger than most people realize. The postsecondary share of total vocational education enrollments is now approximately equal to the secondary share. At the same time, postsecondary vocational students are frequently enrolled in occupationally specific programs, while only one fourth of the secondary vocational enrollments are in occupationally specific programs. Here are some figures:

- Roughly 16.8 million students are now reported as enrolled in vocational education
- 10.2 million of these are reported as secondary students
- 6.5 million of these are reported as postsecondary students

In addition, there are 4.2 million postsecondary enrollments of these types:

- 1.0 million in four-year colleges that are not reported
- 1.2 million in proprietary schools that are not reported
- 2.0 million in unaccredited institutions that are not reported

In effect, when one takes into account all the different types of providers, there are about the same number of students enrolled at the postsecondary level as at the secondary level.

The community college segment is the largest single component of this postsecondary level. Community colleges enroll 4.5 million vocational students and AVTIs (which are considered the equivalent of community colleges in some states) enroll another 0.5 million students.

Focusing on occupationally specific program enrollments the numbers are:

- SECONDARY--2.8 million out of 10.2 million (27%)
- POSTSECONDARY (community college segment only)--2.4 million out of 4.5 million (53%)

These community college enrollments are concentrated mostly in technical, health, business and office, distributive, and trade and industrial programs. Concentrations are not heavy at community colleges in agriculture, industrial arts, or home economics.

Highlights of the Hearing

- In most states community colleges are very responsive to requests from the State Department of Commerce (or Development) to provide the quick-start training needed to attract new industry. When supplemental State funding is available for such training the response is facilitated.
- Retraining workers whose skills do not match available jobs has become a major focus of community college adult vocational education.
- Providing technical assistance to business and industry in the form of specialized customized training has become a major outreach function of community colleges.
- Many community colleges report that significant numbers of persons with bachelor's or graduate degrees are enrolling to obtain marketable skills.
- Remedial/developmental education continues to be an important mission of community colleges, especially the provision of reading and mathematics skills needed by students before they can enroll in vocational technical courses of studies.
- The use of telecommunications in community colleges is developing at a fast pace. Telecourses, computer-assisted instruction, videotape courses, etc., are all used to provide innovative methods of instruction.

- Career counseling at community colleges has moved from the "track 'em, train 'em, place 'em" approach of the 1940s and 1950s to a new 1980s and 1990s approach that stresses customization, individualization, flexibility, and uniqueness as well as the computerized career information systems developed during the 1960s and 1970s.

- For community colleges (as in many other aspects of American life according to Naisbitt) California and Florida are the two leading, pace-setting States that can serve as key indicators of the future. In Florida, for example, the community colleges are seen to be on the cutting edge of bridging the cap between education and business/industry, especially high tech industry. California's recent changes in community college funding can serve to give an alert to possible funding changes in other States.

- Many different measures of cost-effectiveness can show that public dollars spent on community colleges bring about a high return on investment for the public. Similarly, time and money spent by a person on a community college education bring about a high individual rate of return on investment.

- Community college funding rests on a solid foundation composed of a combination of tuition, State government support, local taxes, private donations, and Federal government support. As a rule "quality programs are better funded programs."

THE FUTURE

Presenters at the hearing gave the impression that most of the highlights of community college vocational technical education given in the previous section of this paper will continue to characterize the future. In addition, the presenters felt that:

- Education at community colleges (and at all levels, for that matter) should aim less at teaching persons to practice a given trade and more at equipping people to adapt themselves to a variety of jobs over a lifetime.
- The nation's demand for engineers (60,000 to 70,000 per year) will not be met, and as a result technicians trained at community colleges will continue to fill many engineering jobs.
- Industry will continue to ask for associate degree technicians with advanced skills that cannot be taught within two year's time, given the abilities typically brought by students to community colleges from high schools.
- High tech employers are likely to resemble the Kennedy Space Center where 85% of the technical positions now require a community college level education and only 15% require a four-year or higher education.
- Community colleges will eventually come under close national scrutiny similar to that given to the American high school in recent years.
- Community college enrollments will suffer less than will enrollments in secondary schools and four-year colleges.

CHANGES NEEDED

Presenters at the hearing tended to devote more time to documenting the current state of vocational technical education in the community college than to suggesting changes for the future. In fact, many presenters did not address the issue of change at all. Those who did so provided the following suggestions:

- Our secondary schools must change to prepare students for becoming technicians within two years at community colleges. Perhaps an alternate track is needed in high school--one "between" college preparatory and the general or vocational track--one that might be called pre-technical. An outline of a proposed curriculum was suggested as a starting point in developing such a high school track.

- Community colleges need to find ways to stop turning away so many students from popular programs (such as computers). Nationally thousands of students are either turned away or put on waiting lists.

- The governance problems should be eliminated in those States where community colleges are governed as part of higher education and vocational education is governed as part of secondary or basic education. Among the perceived problems that result from split governance are: "unfair" distribution of federal vocational funds; excessive turfdom battles between secondary and postsecondary systems and institutions; lack of a genuine commitment to articulation; duplication of programs and efforts.

- The problems caused by having a relatively old (mean age of 45-50 years) faculty and staff in vocational technical education must be overcome. There is a serious need for the technical upgrading of faculty. Education must counter the situation that causes many competent middle-age persons in vocational technical fields to choose work in business and industry because of the better reward system.

- Community colleges need to make it clear to industry that customized "company specific training" contract instruction is part of their mission.

- Community colleges must clarify the role of vocational technical education in economic development.
- Vocational technical education needs more strategic planning to identify trends and adapt as necessary.
- Professional associations of persons and institutions involved in vocational technical education should be dedicated to developing the "intellectual capital" needed to design and operate the type of educational system really needed for the modern information society.
- Professional associations concerned with vocational technical education should join forces and cooperate in a multi-year effort to revitalize the system. A scheme was outlined that involved research and development, action plan development, and dissemination.
- The American Vocational Association should help establish a national standard or a "growth incentive" system to encourage community college occupational instructors to achieve and maintain currency and relevance in their fields.

A Final Note

The author of this paper proposes an additional change needed to enhance the future of vocational technical education in the community college setting. Although this change was not mentioned explicitly during the hearing it has frequently been stated publicly by a great many different persons interested in the place of postsecondary education in the American Vocational Association. This proposal is by no means simply a personal "pet peeve" of the author. The change needed can be described as follows:

- There needs to be "a place for postsecondary educators within AVA." History, State governance patterns, entrenched leadership, and many other factors have all combined to present AVA to postsecondary educators as a secondary bastion. The tiny technical division is the only division composed primarily of postsecondary members (who have repeatedly but unsuccessfully tried to change

the division's name to "postsecondary")--but all other divisions are so secondary-dominated that postsecondary members find it almost impossible to recruit community college employees for AVA membership. In addition, AVA has taken legislative positions in the past that have appeared to community colleges to favor secondary interests, rather than community college interests. The changes needed in AVA to attract large numbers of community college employees should be carefully studied, and then put into effect soon. Otherwise, postsecondary vocational technical educators will "find a home" with some other professional association.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
8118 Math-Sciences Building
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024

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